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BURNS NIGHTS IN ST. LOUIS

BY THE BURNS CLUB



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Book \_\_\_\_\_









*Yours Sincerely*  
*W. K. Dixey*

*President*  
*The Burns Club of St. Louis*

# BURNS NIGHTS IN ST. LOUIS

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BURNS AND ENGLISH POETRY  
BURNS AND THE PROPHET ISAIAH  
BURNS AND THE AULD CLAY BIGGIN

View Points of  
PROFESSOR J. L. LOWES, JUDGE M. N. SALE *and*  
SOLICITOR GENERAL F. W. LEHMANN.



THE CLUB, THE ROOM, THE BURNSIANA,  
THE NIGHTS

*By* WALTER B. STEVENS

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## THE BURNS CLUB OF ST. LOUIS

This club exists, the by-laws say, "for the purpose of commemorating the life and genius of Robert Burns." The purpose had its original expression in the Burns Cottage at the World's Fair of 1904. Reproductions of palaces, copies of historic mansions, imposing types of architecture of many lands were grouped in "The Place of Nations," as it was called. In the midst of them was the replica of the clay-walled, straw-thatched birthplace of him who "brought from Heaven to man the message of the dignity of humanity." It was built and maintained by the Burns Cottage Association, composed of men who had found inspiration in the creed of Burns. The Burns Club of St. Louis succeeded the Cottage Association. It was given a permanent home in the upper chamber of the quaint house of the Artists' Guild. There, about the great fireplace, the Club has assembled treasured relics of Burns' life. Upon the walls are portraits of Burns, sketches of scenes made familiar by his writings and facsimiles of many poems in his handwriting. The chamber is open to the rafters. It has little windows close up under the eaves. The whole interior architecture accords with the collection of Burnsiana and with the uses to which the chamber is put by the Club.

Anniversaries of Burns are observed by the Burns Club of St. Louis in ways original. The table is spread in the club room. Not forgotten are the oatmeal cake, the haggis, the Scotch

shortbread. By way of introduction to the dinner the president repeats a few lines from Burns, such as *The Selkirk Grace*:

Some hae meat, and canna eat,  
And some wad eat that want it;  
But we hae meat and we can eat,  
And sae the Lord be thanket.

In numbers the Club is not unwieldy. The members fill comfortably the table running the length of the chamber, with room for a congenial guest or two. There is enough Scotch blood in the gathering to save the flavor of Scotch speech. But the membership ranges widely in nativity, in creed and in vocation. The spirit of Burns pervades and abides. Lines with which this spirit is invoked are found by the president of the Club in such quotations from Burns as his own farewell to the brethren of St. James lodge at Tarbolton:

A last request permit me here  
When yearly ye assemble a',  
One round, I ask it with a tear,  
To him, the Bard, that's far awa'.

As the dinner progresses, there are stories of Burns; there are spirited discussions on opinions about Burns; there are quotations and interpretations; there is singing of the songs of "rantin' rovin' Robin." And thus the Burns Night in St. Louis moves along all too rapidly.

When the table is cleared, comes the more formal event of the evening—a thoughtful address on Burns, sometimes given by a member of the Club, sometimes delivered by a guest. With

the feeling that the interest will be shared by other lovers of Burns, two of these addresses before the Burns Club of St. Louis are presented in this book. With them is incorporated the very noteworthy address on Burns by Frederick W. Lehmann, now solicitor general of the United States, which made memorable Scottish Day at the World's Fair. Fittingly, place is given to the "Lines to Burns" written by a talented Chinaman, a member of the Chinese Imperial Commission to the World's Fair.

W. B. S.

After the dinner of 1911, Professor J. L. Lowes, of the chair of English at Washington University, took the Burns Club to an unusual viewpoint of the poet's genius. He led his hearers back to the English poets of the Eighteenth Century. He described and illustrated the repressed, pent-up, tamed spirit of that period until its very smoldering presence seemed to fill the chamber. And then with sudden transition, he caused to burst forth, without bounds, the soulful flame of Burns.

The honor guest of the Club upon this Burns Night was David Franklin Houston, chancellor of Washington University.

## BURNS AND ENGLISH POETRY.

*By* John Livingston Lowes,  
Professor of English, Washington University,

January 28, 1911.

This address was delivered extempore, and, as it stands, has been dictated from scanty notes. It is printed here, not because the writer deems it in form or content worthy of such permanence—for he does not; but because the Burns Club has asked that it be done.—J. L. L.

No one but a Scotchman born has any right to speak of Burns before a Burns Club, and I, alas! am not a Scotchman born. It is true that one of my remote grandmothers was named Janet Adair, and that an ancestor of my own name lies buried, for some inscrutable reason, in Holyrood Chapel. But another grandmother bore the name of Anne West, and still another was christened in unspellable Holland Dutch, so that I fear there is a blending of blood which excludes me from the magic circle of those who call Burns countryman. Moreover, Burns is like Shakespeare, in that everything about him has been already said, and most of it said finally. To attempt to add a note to the chorus of praise with which for a century he has been greeted would be "to paint the lily, and add another hue unto the rainbow." My only salvation (and that for the time being is yours, too) lies in approaching Burns from outside; and what I wish, with your permission, to do very briefly this evening, is to consider something of what Burns brought into the great current of English poetry.

Burns appeared at the beginning of a reaction against a reaction. The century to whose close he belonged had swung far enough away from

the traits and qualities which had characterized the great age that had preceded it. Few periods have been so keenly alive, so virile and red-blooded, so brilliantly varied in their interests and activities as that of Elizabeth. There was a zest in living that expressed itself in a superb spontaneity, a careless audacity, an unconsidered lavishness, both in life and in letters, which it would be hard to parallel elsewhere. There was the stir of great movements in the air. The influence of the Renaissance, sweeping up through France and Spain from Italy—"that great limbec of working brains," as old James Howell afterwards called it—had reached England. The voyages to the New World and the daring exploits of men who (in the phrase which embodies the very spirit of the Elizabethan voyagers) "made a wild dedication of themselves To unpath'd waters, undream'd shores"—all this had powerfully stimulated men's imagination. The menace of Spain was making possible such patriotism as burns in old Gaunt's dying words:

This happy breed of men, this little world,  
This precious stone set in the silver sea . . .  
This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this  
    England . . .  
This land of such dear souls, this dear, dear  
    land . . .  
England, bound in with the triumphant sea.

In a word, men were living deeply, broadly, keenly, and the literature reflected that depth and breadth and vividness. It reflected it in the richness and searching veracity with which al-

most every phase of human passion was depicted; it reflected it in the unfettered freedom of form that characterized the literature from the briefest lyric to a tragedy like *Lear*; and it was couched in a diction which was often like the large utterance of the early gods.

Then gradually the pendulum began to swing the other way. This is no place to enter into the reasons for the change. The change came, and it is what it carried with it that concerns us here. I am not one of those who decry the eighteenth century. That much maligned period had its own contribution to make, and it made it in its own dispassionate and businesslike way. But its needle pointed to the other pole, and its ideals were in large degree opposed to those of the spacious days that had preceded it. And nowhere was this more strikingly true than in its poetry. If, then, you will permit me to be concrete, I should like to suggest a few things that may help to set in clearer light the real significance of Robert Burns.

In the first place, one fundamental article of the eighteenth century poetical code was the repression of passion. Here, for example, are a few passages taken wholly at random from the poets of the period, which will illustrate what I mean:

Let all be hushed, each softest motion cease,  
Be every loud tumultous thought at peace.

That happens to be from Congreve lines, *On Miss Arabella Hunt Singing*. Again, in Parnell:

When thus she spake—Go rule thy will,  
Bid thy wild passions all be still.

Doctor Johnson, too, strikes the same note :

Pour forth thy fervors for a healthful mind,  
Obedient passions, and a will resigned.

Not otherwise writes Whitehead, in a poem  
called (of all things!) *The Enthusiast* :

The tyrant passions all subside,  
Fear, anger, pity, shame and pride  
No more my bosom move.

I shall add without comment a few more  
examples :

At helm I make my reason sit,  
My crew of passions all submit (Green) ;

Content me with an humble shade,  
My passions tamed, my wishes laid (Dyer) ;

And through the mists of passion and of sense  
To hold his course unfaltering (Akenside) ;

. . . . . the virtuous man  
Who keeps his tempered mind serene and pure,  
And every jarring passion aptly harmonized  
(Thomson).

These are perfectly typical examples of the  
attitude of the times. And it is, of course, a  
sound enough attitude ethically, too. But that



is not the point. The point is simply this. Suppose Lear and Hamlet and Othello and Macbeth, suppose Oedipus and Tristram and Launcelot and Faust had possessed "obedient passions and a will resigned"! The question answers itself. No! with all its praiseworthy effort to see things as they are, the eighteenth century shut its eyes to one of the most fundamental facts of all—to those deep-rooted and elemental impulses whose clash and often tragic struggle purge and uplift through pity and terror. Clever and often masterly as its craftsmanship was; clear-eyed and shrewd and sane as many of its judgments were, the period hermetically sealed itself against the great winds of the spirit.

But that was not all. Not only was the range of human interest notably restricted, but the splendid freedom of poetic form that had characterized the earlier days was gone as well. Upon that superb creature, the spirit of English poetry, there was imposed the strait-jacket of what was virtually a single metre; the thing was cabined, cribbed, confined, bound in, by the limits of the decasyllabic couplet. Now one may grant at once that to certain purposes no instrument could be more exquisitely adapted than the heroic couplet. But, as in so many instances, the difficulty lay not in the use, but in the abuse of the medium; and a measure which fits an epigram like a glove is not for that reason necessarily adapted to voice the poignant outcry of a tortured soul. But, after all, precisely one trouble with the eighteenth century was the fact that it *didn't* greatly vex its soul; and one result of its coolly rationalistic attitude toward

life, coupled with the influence of the amazing craftsmanship of Pope, was a devastating monotony of heroic couplets, which spread over English poetry like a flood, with only the tip of an occasional Ararat projecting above the waves. I know I am painting in too broad lines, in too high lights; but this is after dinner, and I am, I think, telling the essential truth.

But still another count has to be added to the indictment. For no less fatal than the relentless vogue of the couplet was the prevalence of a so-called "poetic diction." The age revelled in conventional stock terms for things. To call a spade by its proper name was like presenting oneself in company *in puris naturalibus*. It is all very like Bottom and Snout and the lion in the *Midsummer Night's Dream*. "To bring in a lion," says Bottom, "To bring in—God shield us!—a lion among ladies is a most dreadful thing; for there is not a more fearful wild fowl than your lion living." "Therefore," says Snout, "another prologue must tell that he is *not* a lion." And so, for the benefit of artistic sensibilities, in the poetry we are considering, the lions roar as gently as any sucking doves. The wind is softened to "the trembling zephyr" or "the fragrant gale." Shakespeare's "Cradle of the rude imperious surge" becomes "the sprightly flood," or "swelling tide"; a boot is "the shining leather that encased the limb"; a pipe is "the short tube that fumes beneath the nose." Does one make coffee? Then, "From silver spouts the grateful liquors glide, And China's earth receives the smoking tide." Does one stab? Why then, one "with steel invades the

life." In a word, the poetry of the eighteenth century was doomed to go in periwig and small clothes; the superb forthrightness and directness and poignancy of the virile speech of deep feeling or compelling passion was to it an unknown tongue.

And in upon all that formalism and convention and repression came Robert Burns—"Neither eighteenth century nor nineteenth century" (as Arthur Symonds put it a year or so ago); "neither local nor temporary, but *the very flame of man*, speaking as a man has only once or twice spoken in the world." And now, perhaps, we may see more clearly some elements of his significance.

"*The very flame of man*"—that puts the essential thing, I think, as well, perhaps, as words after all can express it. For what one thinks of first in Burns's work is its throbbing, pulsing life, which fuses at white heat whatever inert stuff comes into his alembic. The eighteenth century was interested, in its cold methodical way, in *abstract truth*. Burns' passion for *reality*, for the *true thing*, was like a consuming fire, and *Holy Willie's Prayer*, and the *Address to the Deil*, and the *Address to the Unco Guid* in their trenchant lines strip sham and hypocrisy stark naked, and leave them shivering. The eighteenth century had its theories, pleasing enough, about *the rights of man*. Burns did what Wordsworth rightly insisted every true poet must do—he "carried the thing alive into the heart by passion," and "A man's a man for a' that"—and I should even say *The Jolly Beggars*, too,—is worth all the volumes of abstract theorizing that preceded it. The eighteenth

century took little stock in *nature*. That line in *The Rape of the Lock*—"Sol through white curtains shot a timorous ray"—has always seemed to me rather engagingly symbolic of the whole period; it loved to look at nature, when it looked at all, through curtained windows, and the couplet was quite large enough for what it saw. But to Burns the world of nature, animate and inanimate, and the world of human life were bone of one bone and flesh of one flesh. There could scarcely be two men more essentially unlike at most points than St. Francis of Assissi and Robert Burns, yet at one point there is an almost startling kinship between the two. Some of you will recall St. Francis's wonderful Canticle of the Sun:

"Praised be my Lord God with all his creatures; and especially *our brother the sun*, who brings us the day, and who brings us the light; fair is he, and shining with a very great splendor: Oh Lord, he signifies us to Thee.

"Praised be my Lord for *our sister the moon*, and for the stars, the which he has set clear and lovely in heaven.

"Praised be my Lord for *our brother the wind*, and for air and cloud, calms and all weather, by the which thou upholdst in life all creatures.

"Praised be my Lord for *our sister water*, who is very serviceable to us, and humble, and precious, and clean.

"Praised be my Lord for *our brother fire*, through whom thou givest us light in the darkness; and he is bright, and pleasant, and very mighty and strong."

It is that same vivid sense of the brotherhood of all things that are, that is Burns's authentic note:

Wee, sleekit, cow'rin, tim'rous beastie,  
O, what a panic's in thy breastie!  
Thou need na start awa sae hasty,  
Wi' bickering brattle!  
I wad be laith to rin an' chase thee,  
Wi' murd'ring pattle! . . .

Thy wee bit housie, too, in ruin!  
Its silly wa's the win's are strewin!  
An' naething, now, to big a new ane,  
O' foggage green!  
An' bleak December's winds ensuin,  
Baith snell an' keen!

The eighteenth century was little disturbed by *love*. It could "die of a rose in aromatic pain"—but it died in an epigram! The passion that surged through the Elizabethan and Jacobean lyrics and plays had beat itself out; in Pope's hands even the tragic agony of Eloisa and Abelard is softened into a mild regret; the theme is played on muted strings. Nobody sang in those days as when, in the greater days before, "wild music burthened every bough." One doesn't *sing* satire and epigram and critique. But with Burns human passion came again to its own. For, strange as it is, it is no less true, that it isn't what men *think*, but what they *feel* that lasts. What Thales and all the Seven Sages thought out "mit Mühe und Not" is as obsolete as the implements forged by Tubal Cain,

while Sapho's handful of mutilated, fragmentary lines that have survived are contemporary with Shelley and with Poe. And in Burns this same elemental human note makes itself heard again. Imagine Dryden or Pope or Doctor Johnson, or even Goldsmith or Gray or Cowper writing:

"O, my love's like a red, red rose,  
That's newly sprung in June!"

And that brings us to another thing.

New wine won't go into old bottles—and here, emphatically, was new wine. What was to happen? Well, that happened which has happened again and again. It happened when, with only the measured, balanced cadences of classical prosody to express it, there came into the world that passionate thing—for that certainly is what it was—that found its most marvelous expression in the close of the eighth chapter of the letter to the Romans. Could *that* find room in the stately, serene hexameters of Virgil, or in the graceful stanzas of the Horatian ode? It couldn't, and it didn't; it beat its own music out, and we have, as the result of it, the poignant, plangent measures of the Latin hymns. The new and deeper passion had forged for itself a new and marvelous measure, that has influenced the poets ever since. Could Beethoven's stormy and tragic meaning cramp itself within the conventional rondo of Hayden or even Mozart? Play one of these, and then listen to the scherzos—the same fundamental form, but *quam mutatus ab illo!*—the scherzos of the great symphonies, with their rollicking gayety, grim

mystery, and tragic portent. And so, when Burns appeared, the day of the heroic couplet was done—done because the winged, flame-like thing he brought could not be caged within it, any more than Lear's ravings, or the sea-music of *Pericles*, or the something rich and strange of the *Tempest* could be put in Shakespeare's earlier blank verse.

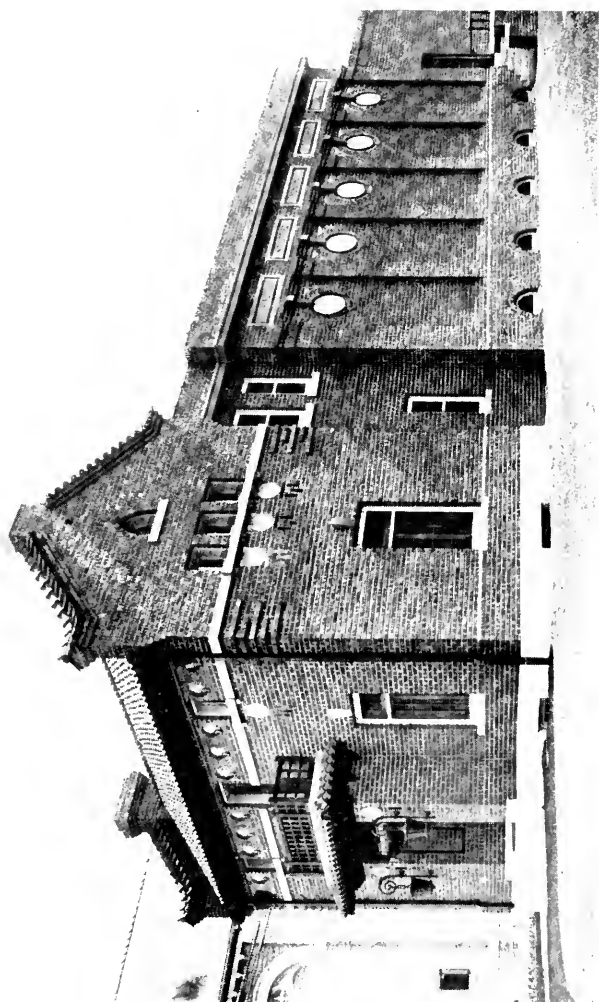
And as he brought freedom of rhythm once more, so with him came back again to English poetry a diction, fresh and masculine and vigorous. "Paul's words," said Luther, "are alive: they have hands and feet; if you cut them they bleed." And Burns's words are no less alive, and they are besides racy with the tang of the soil. They are like the speech that Montaigne loved: "It is a natural, simple, and unaffected speech that I love," wrote Montaigne, "so written as it is spoken, and such upon the paper as it is in the mouth, a pithie, sinnowie, full, strong, compendious and material speech." And with Tam O'Shanter, far more than with Wordsworth's amiable experiments, the reign of the old poetic diction was at an end.

"The very flame of man speaking as a man has only spoken once or twice in the world"—that *was* Robert Burns. And this authentic speech of his proclaimed for English poetry the dawn of a new day.









*Louis C. Spiering, Architect*

HOME OF THE BURNS CLUB OF ST. LOUIS  
(The Artists' Guild)

Midway in a mile of St. Louis culture stands the quaint Artists' Guild. This mile begins with the monumental entrances of Westmoreland and Portland Places, through which are vistas of parking between double drives bordered by mansions. Then come towering apartment houses of the highest class. A few steps farther, on the left, are the great gateways of Kingsbury Place and Washington Terrace, while eastward Westminster and Washington Boulevards seemingly narrow in the distance to lanes with overhanging trees. Beyond is a group of churches, varied in architecture and creed—Christian, Unitarian and Congregational. Sandwiched between two of them is this club house and art gallery of the Artists' Guild, the home of the Burns Club and of the Franklin Club. In close alignment are the Soldan High School and the William Clark Grammar School, latest and best of public school architecture and equipment in the country. Clustered opposite and in the immediate vicinity are the Smith Academy and the Manual Training School of Washington University and two of the academies of the Catholic sisterhoods—Visitation and St. Philomena. Windermere and Cabanne Places, with their fine residences, are laterals. Cabanne Library, the Model Police Station and the great St. Ann Asylum complete this mile of St. Louis culture. Well-named Union Avenue! What a fitting center for a shrine to Robert Burns!

Like unto Isaiah, Judge Moses N. Sale compared Burns when the Club observed the 151st anniversary of the birth of the poet. He found in Burns the gift of tongues and of prophesy for men of every clime and all times. He drew parallels between the words of the ancient prophet in Israel and those of him who "scotched" the Pharisees, the "unco guid" of a later generation. He rebuked in scathing terms those who question the religious nature of Burns and who see in the "Cotter's Saturday Night" and other Burns poems of like nature only "recoil from excesses of the flesh." The straight-from-the-shoulder sentences of Judge Sale found quick-answering echo in standing vote of the Club, and in the first suggestion to print this volume of Burns Nights in St. Louis.

## BURNS, THE PROPHET.

*By* Moses N. Sale,  
Late Judge of the Circuit Court of St. Louis,

January 25, 1910.

My apology is due to the members of the club for reading from my manuscript on this occasion. I might tell you, and you would doubtless believe me, that the duties of office and a self-assumed obligation to a body of young men, anxious to improve themselves as lawyers, have not given me the time since I was notified by our secretary, of the part assigned to me on this occasion. These reasons would form a durable foundation for my apology, and they certainly bear the appearance of being solid. They seem to me to be apparently valid excuses for my not being able to deliver to you an extemporaneous address, conceived on the spur of the moment and inspired by the occasion itself, after days of deliberation. These reasons, however, are apparent and not real. Stage fright, a form of nervousness, known to those learned in medical jargon as "amnesic aphasia"—the chief symptom of which is the inability on the part of the patient to call to mind the exact word he wants, although recognizing it and able to pronounce it when found or when suggested. This is the real reason for my putting on paper, my thoughts, concerning Scotland's greatest poet, and one of the world's great poets. I hope you will detect, concealed in that reason, my great respect for the members of the Burns Club.

Before entering, however, on the subject assigned to me, there is another matter which has long lain on my mind, and which has troubled me no little. I disavow sincerely and earnestly any desire to pose as a reformer or to act as a censor in matters of social etiquette; yet it strikes me that on occasions of this kind, chaos is substituted for cosmos. Like him whose birthday we celebrate this evening, I am ordinarily a sociable animal; I enjoy the good things of life that so sparingly fall to my lot, but I find it beyond me altogether to be my natural self, I find it impossible to be sociable, to enjoy myself and to contribute my share to the enjoyment of others when I sit down to a table laden with good things to whet and satisfy the appetite, knowing all the while that the sword of Damocles hangs over my head ready to drop at the word of the presiding genius. Foreknowledge of coming events on those occasions aggravates every symptom of my disease; and I am, therefore, driven to the necessity of putting my words on paper in order to make myself intelligible. If I permit my dirt-self to enjoy the eating and drinking, I do so at the expense of my psychic-self. I always envied the man, who, knowing he was to be called upon after his dinner for a speech, could yet enjoy himself as fully and freely as if nothing direful was impending. I confess that on these occasions my bodily and my mental self get into a fracas, and I am unable to extricate the one from the other until I am on my way home, walking in the cool of the night air, when my mental-self reasserts its dominion, and I recall to mind the splendid

speech I had intended to make, but forgot; and then I see all too clearly, what a glorious opportunity I missed of talking myself into local fame. This confession, publicly made, together with the slight pressure of official work, and my profound respect for the Burns Club, are my justification for reading my address.

I want to make the suggestion now to members of the Burns Club, that hereafter, at these annual commemorations, the order of business be so changed as to make it possible for the speakers to enjoy the dinner by giving them the opportunity of emptying themselves of their speeches, so as to make room for the dinuer. Speeches first, dinner next.

May I not modestly ask, "What was I or my generation that I should get sic exaltation" as to be selected by the club for the honor of speaking to you of Robert Burns on the 151st anniversary of his birth? I am honored beyond my meed. I have frequently spoken in terms of profound admiration of the work of Burns and of my deep sympathy with his short and wonderful career. I have thus spoken in the presence of some of my friends, who were so fortunate as to have been born in Scotland or descended from Scotch ancestors, and doubtless my talking in such presence is responsible for my plight to-night.

I cannot now recall when I first began to read Burns. Except in a general way I cannot now say what first attracted or drew me towards him. I do know what continues to draw me in that direction and what will hold me fast to him as a friend so long as life continues. I am not quite

sure, but I am inclined to believe that his Ode to Poverty was the first of his minor poems which I read or heard read, and I was so charmed with its truth and earnestness that I began to read and study the poet. The Doric dialect of South Scotland, in which Burns wrote, only increased the charm of his writing for me. The more of him I read the more I wanted to read; the stronger grew my admiration as I read, and my love for him as an older brother, who suffered much, who endured poverty and hardship, and yet during his all too brief life set beacon lights along the path of human life, to warn his fellow men of the pit-falls into which he, himself, had so frequently fallen.

My slight knowledge of the German language made it easier for me to understand the Scotch dialect. I always found an exquisite pleasure in tracing the wandering of words from people to people, from language to language. History furnishes no stronger proof than language that the time was when man to man the world o'er were brothers. The poet says: "Go fetch to me a pint of wine, and fill it in a silver tassie." "Tassie" is the German "tasse," English "cup." In the song of Burns where the young lassie considers what she could best do with her auld man, the young wife complains that "he *hosts* and he *hirples*;" "Hosts" is the German "Husten," to cough. You remember "That sark she coft for her wee Nannie." "Coft" is the German "kaufen," to buy. I rede ye—rede, the German "rede"—English, speech or discourse. "May you better reck the rede than ever did the adviser." "Reck" is the German "rechen," which



means to count or calculate. "Skaith," Scotch—for injury, is the German word "schade." ("The Deil he could na skaith thee") as the Scotch "blate" is the German "bloede;"—"sicker"—secure;—"unsicker"—insecure—German *sicher*. "Geck"—("ye *geck* at me because I'm poor")—German *gucken*. The Cotter "*wales*" a portion of the big Ha' Bible, with judicious care—German *Wählen*—choose.

These are simply illustrations of what to me was an additional charm in the language of Burns. Burns has sung himself into the hearts of men and women the world over, and he will remain there enshrined until time is no more. Every great poet is a prophet. Burns was such.

"He smote the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips did he slay the wicked." He had a message to deliver. He expressed it throughout his poems in manifold ways.

In the ode to General Washington's birthday, he expresses it thus:

"But come ye Sons of Liberty,  
Columbia's offspring, brave as free,  
In danger's hour still flaming in the van,  
Ye know, and dare maintain the Royalty of Man."  
and again:

"Is there for honest poverty  
That hangs his head an' a' that  
The coward slave—we pass him by,  
We dare be poor for a' that!  
For a' that, an' a' that.  
Our toils obscure an' a' that,  
The rank is but the guinea's stamp,  
*The man's the gowd for a' that.*"

The pith of sense and pride of worth, the genuine in man as against cant and hypocrisy, the false in man, are the chief notes of his song. In a broad sense, he sang and taught the worth of man; that life is worth the living, if lived worthily.

As his great countryman expresses it:

"To the ill-starred Burns was given the power of making man's life more venerable, but that of wisely guiding his own life was not given."

You may sing loud and you may sing long, but unless there is sweetness and truth—I should say the sweetness of truth—in the voice that sings, the louder you sing, the smaller will your audience become until it dwindles to the singer alone.

That Burns sang the truth sweetly, is not only demonstratable from his own writings, but is likewise proven by his constantly growing audience.

Commencing, as he did, with a few peasant listeners in his Ayrshire home, he had before his death an audience wide as the confines of the English language, which since his death has swollen into a loving and reverent audience, embracing the civilized world wherever an articulate tongue is spoken. His poems have been translated into German, French, Italian, Spanish, Dutch, Danish, Hungarian, Swiss and even into Latin verse—aye, even into Russian; and who knows, but that the leaven of his cry for the royalty, the worth of man—as man, is to-day working in that semi-civilized country, teaching the Russian peasant that it is man's inhumanity to man makes countless thousands mourn, and that the pith of sense and pride of worth are higher rank than a belted knight.

In 1786 the first edition of his poems was published, known as "The Kilmarnock Edition." Every year since that memorable year, 1786, almost without exception, somewhere among the sons of men whom Burns so loved, some volume by Burns or concerning him has been published, and in some of those years many volumes were published, until now the bibliography of Burns, things written by and of him, in the various quarters of the globe, including only single copies of each edition of such publications, would constitute a library of more than one thousand volumes.

What does all this mean? It can have only one significance, and that is, that Burns had a world-wide message to deliver, which men were eager to hear, and for which the human soul hungered; that his message was true and came from the heart of one man to the hearts of his fellow-men, not only to his fellow-Scot, but to his fellow-man the world over.

If it could ever be said truthfully of any poet in any language, it must be said of Burns that he, indeed, "found tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything." Notwithstanding the truth of this assertion it may not be unbecoming in me to say, since the local press has been discussing a censorship of the stage, that our own beloved poet would have been put in the index *librorum prohibitorum* or at least in the index *expurgatorius* long, long ago, if orthodoxy had its way; and this is quite evident from a pamphlet published in 1811 entitled, "Burnsiana, addressed to real christians of every denomination," by the

Rev. William Peebles, and another pamphlet published in 1869, entitled, "Should Christians commemorate the birthday of Robert Burns," by the Rev. Fergus Ferguson. I have never read, nor have I ever seen a copy of either of these oblivion-seeking publications; and the publications, except to the curious students of Burns, have dropped where they belong, into "the insatiate maw of oblivion"; but if there had been a censorship of the press in Burns' day, Burns would have been barred. The very names of Rev. Fergus Ferguson and the Rev. William Peebles sound strange to our ears, and except for the fact that each of these reverend gentlemen, *during a long and useful life*, wrote a monograph upon a subject connected with the name of Robert Burns, they would now be buried so deep in the bottomless pit of oblivion that the trumpet of the Angel Gabriel would not disturb their rest.

In 1859 a chronicle of the hundredth birthday of Burns was published at Edinburgh, containing an account of more than eight hundred meetings held in various parts of the English-speaking world, together with the most important speeches delivered at such meetings. Here one hundred years after the birth of Burns was an answer to the Rev. Fergus Ferguson, an answer unanimously in the affirmative, that Christians—genuine Christians—not necessarily those who wear the garb of sanctity, should commemorate the birthday of Robert Burns, and in behalf of at least a portion of the non-Christian population of the universe, I affirm that the Jews should likewise commemorate the birthday of Robert

Burns; Robert Burns was a prophet in Israel, and like a veritable prophet, he speaks to the genuine man of every clime and all times, to all those who answer in the affirmative, the questions, "Have we not all one Father?" "Hath not one God created us all?" Cunning and hypocrisy had invaded the Church of Scotland in Burns' day, as they had churches in other days, and as they will continue to invade the church in yet other days. Burns had little patience with public censors—those who had "naught to do but mark and tell their neighbors' faults and follies." Every age is afflicted with the pestiferous censor—the man who wants to cut and determine for his supposed weaker brothers, the pattern of a moral life; unfortunately these pattern makers do little else than make patterns. Now, a pattern is in and of itself worthless, unless you fashion something useful by means of it. The iron-worker uses his mold, but you can't use the mold or pattern for building a structure and if the iron-worker did no more than make patterns, he would live a very useless life. He must do something with his pattern, he must make articles of utility or of beauty, and if he did nothing more than stand idly by and criticise the work of others he is fulfilling not the purpose of the creator—who only criticised his own work, and that after it was completed and done—but he is following the example of old Hornie, Satan, Nick or Clootie, whatever his title may be—creating nothing, but always seeking "to scaud poor wretches."

Burns scotched the Pharisees, the rigidly righteous of his day—the attendants at the

solemn meetings—those, who “for a pretence make long prayers”; as did Isaiah his hypocritical contemporaries; as Jesus of Nazareth flayed the same everlasting species in his day. “The blind guides which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel”—“the hypocrites who pay their tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and omit the weightier matters of the law”; “those who do all their work for to be seen of men,” “those who sit in the chief seats of the synagogues,” who occupy the front pews, the choice pews of the church—those in short, who have “devotions’ every grace, except the heart”—these, all these and their name is legion, were scourged by Burns with true prophetic fire—and these self-same Scribes and Pharisees are those who speak and write of Burns’ irreligiosity. A brother prophet in Israel had sung:

*“The ox knoweth its owner, and the ass his master’s crib; but Israel doth not know; my people doth not consider.”*

*“Bring no more vain oblations,” sang Isaiah. “Incense is an abomination unto me. The new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies (church meetings) I cannot endure. It is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moon and your appointed feasts my soul hateth. They are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when you spread forth your hands I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when you make many prayers I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood, wash ye! Make yourselves clean; Put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; Cease to do evil; Learn to do well; Seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the*

*fatherless, plead for the widow. The princes are rebellious and companions of thieves. Everyone loves gifts and followeth after rewards. (Just as the boodlers of our day.) They judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them."*

Thus sang the old Hebrew prophet. It is easily imaginable that if we had all that was written by some of the orthodox ministers, (some of the "unco guid") of and concerning Isaiah, there would be found among the lot one with the title page, "Should Israelites commemorate the birth-day of Isaiah?"

Burns might have written the foregoing quotation from Isaiah. He did write so many like it that the preachers in his day thought doubtless—as the priests did of Isaiah, that Burns was irreligious. Many so-called critics of Burns attribute his attacks on the church to motives of personal rancor; but how little they understand the poet! The true poet sees the very soul of things. The rottenness was in the church, and it was this corruption, this humbug and hypocrisy within the church that stirred the ire of Burns as it stirred the soul of the ancient prophet under similar circumstances in the religion of Israel.

Burns had no patience with the new moon, the sabbath, the appointed feasts, the solemn meetings, and the many prayers uttered from the lips. They were to him as they were to Isaiah an abomination, because, in the language of Burns, these things were done:

"In all the pomp of method and of art,  
When men display to congregations wide,  
*Devotion's every grace, except the heart.*

He had no patience with such lip service, but that he was devoutly truly religious, his poems abundantly prove. No one can read "The Cotter's Saturday Night," which contains that beautiful description of religious life in the home of the poor peasant—his own father's home—without feeling that Burns was essentially and truly religious.

In his epistle to the Rev. John McMath, he says:

"I gae mad at their grimaces.  
Their sigh'n, cantin' grace—proud faces,  
Their three-mile prayers and half-mile graces."

And in this same epistle he apostrophizes thus:

"All Hail, Religion, Maid Divine,  
Pardon a muse so mean as mine,  
Who in her rough, imperfect line,  
Thus dares to name thee,  
To stigmatize false friends of thine,  
Can ne'er defame thee."

It seems to me quite obvious that Burns, like the earlier prophets was fighting the devil and his imps, even though such imps were dressed in cloth and wore the livery of heaven. It seems to me that he was only proving how truly religious he was when fighting and opposing, tooth and nail, as he always did, sham and cant, and those, as he puts it,



*"Who take Religion in their mouth, but never have it elsewhere."*

This seems so plain to me that it is hard for me, not wearing orthodoxy's hood, to understand how anyone could ever have questioned Burns' religious nature. If Burns had never known and felt the purity and holiness of religion, if he had never known religion in its reality, he could never have satirized its bastard offspring as he did in "The Holy Tulyie," "Holy Willie's Prayer," "The Holy Fair," and the address to the "Unco Guid." If his own religious feeling was not genuine, whence came his burning indignation at the "false sighin', cantin', grace-proud faces, three-mile prayers and half-mile graces."

Burns did not believe in the orthodox Hell, nor in the doctrine of eternal damnation as taught by the church;

"The fear o' Hell's a hangman's whip,  
To haud the wretch in order,  
But where ye feel your Honor grip,  
Let that ay be your border."

I conclude by calling your attention to a scurvy screed written by Elbert Hubbard, a king among fakirs, who makes books for a living. The screed is one of his little journeys, entitled "Robert Burns." It should be entitled "Elbert Hubbard," for, it is evidently evolved from his inner consciousness, is not based on the life and work of Burns, and is so palpably an effort on the part of Hubbard to drag the gifted Burns

down to his own level that the pamphlet is positively disgusting. It is so flattering to a small soul to find that Burns went a kennin wrang, but the poor fellow whose morals are so frayed and tattered, and whose vision is so blurred and dimmed as to be able to see in the "Cotter's Saturday Night" only a tip to t'other side, that is, the side of excess and vice, is, indeed, to be pitied. This poem, Hubbard says, was written after a debauch, just as after a debauch a man might sign a pledge and swear off, and that this is true of all of Burns' religious poems. This great critic at East Aurora says that all of Burns' religious poems were simply a recoil from excesses of the flesh; and thus hath another self-appointed commentator on Burns damned himself out of his own mouth.

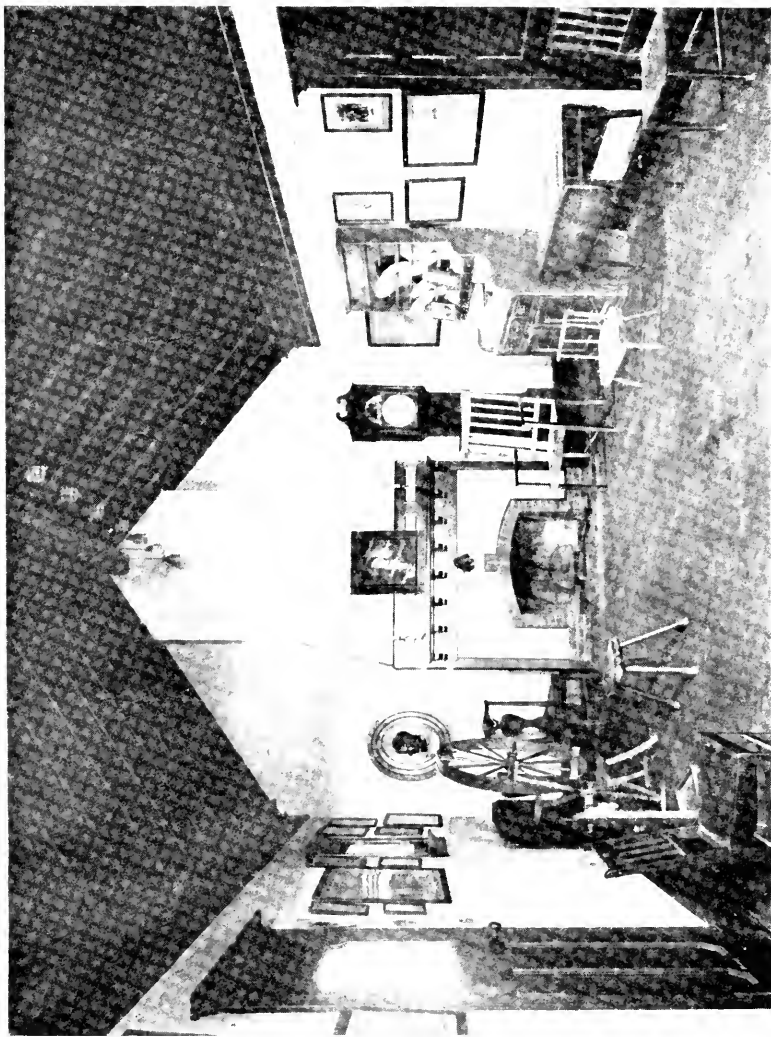
Burns has been criticised, his life and his life's work discussed by a number of the British essayists, including Lord Jeffrey, Christopher North, Thomas Carlyle and Robert Louis Stevenson; his work as a poet has been discussed by professors of universities, bearing all kinds of degrees, and it remains for this wise man at East Aurora, in the State of New York, to discover the real origin of Burns' greatness as a poet.

Christopher North, in his "Recreations," said of Burns: "When he sings, it is like listening to a linnet in the broom, a blackbird in the brake, a laverock in the sky; they sing in the fullness of their joy, as nature teaches them; and so did he; and the man, woman or child, who is delighted not with such singing, be their virtues what they may, must never hope to be in Heaven."

And so I may well say of the man who in all seriousness writes and publishes in this day and generation that the "Cotter's Saturday Night" is the result of a debauch, he can never hope to escape Hell—he is already there.







ROOM OF THE BURNS CLUB OF ST. LOUIS  
(Set For 'The Cotter's Saturday Night')

The Burns Club of St. Louis is rich in Burnsiana. Among the relics which furnish the unique club room are a table which was owned by Burns when he lived at Dumfries, a table from the Tam O'Shanter inn, a third table made of wood from St. Michael's church at Dumfries, a little chair which was the favorite seat of Burns in his childhood, another chair from the cottage in Ayr and the old arm chair of Mrs. Tam O'Shanter,

Where sits our sulky, sullen dame,  
Gathering her brows like gathering storm.  
Nursing her wrath to keep it warm.

The great chimney and fireplace at one end of the long club room provide the ingle-nook which is occupied by an old spinning wheel and reel of the Armour family. On the opposite side is the "dresser" or side-board with an array of the Club's tableware—quaint bowls and plates and ashets.

Upon the mantel, over the fireplace, are candlesticks of Burns' time, and near by hang "Bonnie Jean's" iron holder and the "girdle" on which the cakes were baked. "Bonnie Jean's" milking stool, a cupboard and table which belonged to a family where Burns visited much, a chair that was used often by the poet, and the eight-day clock one hundred and thirty years old give atmosphere to this home of the Burns Club of St. Louis.

The halls of the chamber are hung with reminders of Burns. There are the original drawings made by John Burnet to illustrate Tam O'Shanter, an oil painting of the Burns Cottage at the World's Fair, facsimiles of many of the best known poems of Burns in his handwriting, prints and sketches of Scottish scenes made familiar by the poet.

No Burns Night in St. Louis passes without additions to this already notable collection of Burnsiana.

Chang Yow Tong, of the Chinese Imperial Commission, wrote "Human Progress as Shown at the World's Fair in St. Louis." He dedicated his volume of graceful verse "To Universal Peace." The opening of the Exposition drew from him "China's Message to Columbia." The dedication of the Burns Cottage was on the 24th of June, 1904, which was Bannockburn Battle day. Sir Hugh Gilzean-Reid, president of the World's Press Parliament, delivered the address. Among the guests was Chang Yow Tong who was inspired by the occasion to write his "Lines to Burns."



## LINES TO BURNS.

*By Chang Yow Tong,  
Chinese Imperial Commissioner,*

*Inspired by the Burns Cottage, World's Fair, 1904.*

O! kindred soul of humble birth,  
Divine, though of the lowly earth,  
Forgotten thou art not to-day,  
Nor yet neglected—here's thy bay!

Thy cottage-home, hid from the proud,  
Nor thought of by the vulgar crowd,  
In thine own time has claimed a place  
On which the world's eyes now gaze.

Nor changed its homely, rugged lines,  
Where closely crept thy tender vines;  
But men have changed: nor yet deplore—  
Where once they spurned we now adore.

Thy life and work and destiny  
Contain a meaning deep for me;—  
Though fame be darkened by a fate,  
The laurel-wreath comes soon or late.

Thy splendid fame shall ever rise  
With undimm'd glory o'er the skies;—  
To struggling souls a hope shall yield  
On sailing seas and ploughing field.

I am a foreign, unknown bard,  
Whose devious course is rough and hard;  
But cheered at times by thy sweet song,  
I sing away, nor mind the throng.

Like thee, I'll toil with manly hand,  
Like thee, by manhood ever stand;  
And, guided by thy spirit brave,  
Shall wait for verdict at the grave.

*—Chang Yow Tong.*

Scottish Day at the World's Fair was celebrated August 15, 1904, the anniversary of the birth of Sir Walter Scott. A company of Highlanders escorted other Scottish organizations of St. Louis through the grounds to the Burns Cottage where President David R. Francis extended a welcome in behalf of the Exposition management. W. R. Smith, curator of the Botanical Gardens at Washington, a lover of Burns, of international fame, responded. The Scottish flag was raised. Auld Lang Syne was sung. In the Hall of Congresses, the celebration was continued, with Joseph A. Graham presiding. A poem on Robert Burns, by Willis Leonard McClanahan, was read by Maye McCamish Hedrick. Ingersoll's tribute to "The Place Where Burns was Born" was read. Frederick W. Lehmann, a member of the Exposition board and chairman of the committee on International Congresses, since appointed solicitor general of the United States, delivered the address.

## BURNS OF THE "AULD CLAY BIGGIN."

*By Frederick W. Lehmann,  
Solicitor General of the United States,*

*Scottish Day. August 15, 1904.*

Among the many structures which have been reared upon these grounds to illustrate the achievements, during a hundred years, of a free people in a free land, none has more rightful place than that which so faithfully represents the "auld clay biggin" in which Robert Burns was born. Called untimely from this life ere yet the language in which he wrote was heard here, though he himself had never set foot beyond the borders of his own country, the rich fruitage of his genius is none the less a part of the heritage of our people. Throughout the poetry of Burns breathes the spirit of our institutions, the Declaration of Independence, the Proclamation of Emancipation, and here we have endeavored to realize, as nearly as human effort may, the great truth that

"The rank is but the guinea's stamp  
The man's the gowd for a' that."

The artificial verse of modern pessimism has given us a description of the "man with the hoe," which Burns would not have accepted as a portrait. When he wrote his "Cotter's Saturday Night," he drew his inspiration not from a foreign canvas, but from his own experience. The cotter he describes was his own father, and of the children who knelt at the ingleside to join

in the worship of God, Robert was one. The cotter of Burns' inspiring and uplifting poem toiled as hard as ever did Markham's man with the hoe, but he was not a dull soulless clod; the light of intelligence was in his eye and the fervor of ambition was in his breast. He had been little at school, but he was an educated man. His books were few, but he read and re-read them until he made their learning and wisdom his own. He had strong convictions concerning his position in the order of the universe, and his sense of nearness to God prevented his abasement in the sight of his fellowmen. As his life darkened to its close, the hope that he had for himself he retained for his children, and to the utmost of his ability he strove to fit them for whatever place they might be called to by duty or opportunity.

At five years of age Robert was sent to school at Alloway Mill, and later the father joined with four of his neighbors to hire a teacher for their children. These early years were well employed. Every moment that could be spared from work was spent in study. He read, not only his school books, but Shakespeare, the Spectator, Pope, Ramsay, and above all, a collection of old Scottish songs. "I pored over them," said he, "driving my cart, or walking to labor, song by song, verse by verse, carefully noting the true, tender or sublime, from affectation and fustian. I am convinced I owe to this practice much of my critic craft, such as it is." His mother was learned in the legends and ballads of her country, and she brightened the evenings of her humble home by recounting them to her children.

There was little variety in this life. It was strenuous in its labor and its study, and simple in its recreations. Its burdens were hard to be borne. This showed itself in the early stoop of the poet's shoulders, in his frequent sickness and moods of melancholy. But it was not always dark. He found a charm in the books he pored over so greedily, and a profound pleasure in the companionships which the work and the play of the countryside brought him.

Much has been written concerning his habits during the years of his early manhood, but the testimony of those who had the best opportunities for observation is that he was not a dissipated man. Indeed, his time must in the main have been well spent. His letters and his conversation showed him to be a man of culture, as surely as his poems showed him to be a man of genius. At the age of twenty-seven, when the mode of his life had changed but little, and certainly not for the better, he went from his farm life in Ayrshire to spend a winter in Edinburgh with the highest fashion of that city, and he towered like Saul among his brethren in a company made up of men like Dugald Stewart and Hugh Blair. He was the center of attraction at every hospitable board, not as a spectacle of nine days' wonder, but as a companion of inspiring presence, not alone to set the table in a roar, but as a man learned among scholars and wise among sages. Into the gay assemblies of the city where the Duchess of Gordon held sway, he came as a gentleman, and the Duchess herself had to acknowledge that there was no resisting the charm and fascination of his manner. And yet what acquirements and ac-

complishments he had, he got from his farm life, and from that he got all the inspiration of his muse. In no spirit of mock humility did he tell the gentlemen of the Caledonia Hunt that the muse of his country found him at the plough tail. There she found him, and hardly ever seems she to have sought him elsewhere. It is wonderful how little impress his winter in Edinburgh made upon his verse. It may have led him to look a little more to smoothness and polish, but he got from it no inspiration.

The poet, we were told long ago, is born and not made. We look in vain into the birth and circumstances of the world's greatest children for an explanation of their genius. The unlettered Homer was the great bard of Greece. From among the humblest dwellers on the Avon came the master spirit of our drama, who made the passions of princes and the ambitions of kings the sport of his genius. And from a clay cot near the banks of the Doon the world has gotten its sweetest heritage of song.

Before Burns was fifteen years old, his powers displayed themselves. In the labors of the harvest his partner was a beautiful girl a year younger than himself, and she instilled in him, he tells us, "that delicious passion, which in spite of acid disappointment, gin-horse prudence, and book-worm philosophy, I hold to be first of human joys. . . . Among her love-inspiring qualities she sang sweetly; and it was her favorite reel to which I attempted giving an embodied vehicle in rhyme. . . . Thus with me began love and poetry."

To the gude-wife of Wauchope House he wrote  
in after years,

“When first among the yellow corn  
A man I reckoned was,  
An’ wi’ the lave ilk merry morn  
Could rank my rig and lass,

.....

E’en then a wish, I mind its power,  
O wish that to my latest hour  
Shall strongly heave my breast,  
That I for puir auld Scotland’s sake  
Some useful plan or buik might make,  
Or sing a sang at least.”

He wrote for years, but without publishing, and such currency as his poems had they got through the circulation of manuscript copies from hand to hand. His reputation grew throughout the countryside. While most of his verses were in praise of his fair friends, some of them were bitter lampoons and biting satires upon those he conceived to be his enemies, and so, while he was loved by some, he was feared and consequently hated by others. In the religious controversies between the Old Light and the New, he took a free part, and there was more than one to harbor resentment for his Holy Fair and Holy Willie’s Prayer, and bide his time to indulge it.

Nor had they long to wait. Burns was soon involved in difficulties from which he saw no escape save in flight. He determined to quit

Scotland and to try his fortune in the West Indies. To acquire the means of doing this, and to leave some remembrance of himself in his native land, he ventured upon a publication of his poems.

In June of 1786, he attended, as he believed, for the last time, the meeting of the Masonic Lodge at Tarbolton, and taking his farewell of them he concluded.

“A last request permit me here,  
When yearly ye assemble a’  
One round, I ask it with a tear,  
To him, the bard, that’s far awa.”

Never was parting prayer more richly answered. The children and the children’s children of those who met with him at Tarbolton have been gathered to their fathers, and still throughout all Scotland and in far distant places, wherever Scotia’s sons and daughters have wandered, men and women yearly gather to pay the richest meed that genius can win,—the tribute of their affections to his memory.

Old Fletcher of Saltown said that “if a man were permitted to make all the ballads, he need not care who should make the laws of a nation.” Burns wrote the songs, not only of Scotland, but of every English speaking nation, of countries yet unpeopled when he wrote.

The Kilmarnock edition was published in 1786, when he was twenty-seven years old. The popularity of the book was great and instant, and yet he realized from it the meagre sum of twenty pounds, not much more than enough to pay his



expected passage to Jamaica, and less than one-fifth of what would be paid for a single copy of it at the present time. It is not to be wondered at, that with such reward for such work, he was frequently embarrassed and often in despondent mood. He had an aversion to debt amounting to horror, and all his life he was fighting against it. People blamed his want of thrift and his habits of life; it might have served better to extend now and again a helping hand.

The reception with which the little volume met determined him to stay at home, and to publish a second edition of the book. The printer was willing to risk the expense of the printing, but he insisted on being guaranteed the cost of the paper; and for this the meagre profits of the first edition were altogether insufficient.

But now his fame was not confined to Ayrshire, and his ambitious hopes led him to the larger field of the capital. The friends he made there came to his assistance, and the subscriptions, led by the members of the Caledonian Hunt, gave assurance of success in advance. Five hundred pounds were the rewards of this venture, not secured, however, without great delay and difficulty, his money being doled out to him from time to time, months elapsing before he was able to get a final settlement with his publisher. Two hundred pounds he gave to his brother, who had undertaken the care of their mother, and the remainder he invested in the lease of a farm at Ellisland, the choice of the place being determined rather by the fancy of the poet than by the judgment of the farmer.

His improved circumstances on his return from Edinburgh overcame the objections which the parents of Jean Armour had made to him, and his marriage with her, irregularly contracted long before, was now publicly acknowledged and approved by the kirk.

But the farm was a failure, and the earnings of his literary labors were soon lost upon it, and, much against his will, he accepted a place in the excise at fifty pounds per year.

What he thought of this work we can guess from what he said,

“Searching auld wives barrels  
Och on the day!  
That clarty barm should stain my laurels;  
But—what’ll ye say?  
These movin’ things ca’d wives and weans,  
Wad move the very heart o’ stanes.”

But the best sentiment he expressed on the subject was to the mother of Glencairn, “I would much rather have it said that my profession borrowed credit from me, than that I borrowed credit from my profession.”

He left Ellisland, where he had tried in vain to combine the business of farmer and exciseman, and came to Dumfries. Of his life in this city there has been much criticism. He undoubtedly partook sometimes too deeply of the pleasures of the social bowl, but in this he but shared the habits of his time. His companionship was sought by all the free spirits that gathered in the town, for there was none like “rantin’, rovin’ Robin” to make a night of mirth and merriment. But the reports of his conduct were greatly

exaggerated, not alone by his enemies, but by himself. In his periods of melancholy he was much given to self censure. No man ever acknowledged his faults more freely or more publicly, and if he had said less of his failings, less would have been thought of them. And much of the reproach against him was due to his political views and the freedom with which he expressed them. His heart responded to the rising spirit of independence in France, and it was not in his nature to stifle his convictions. To be a revolutionist was to lose favor in the social realm, and Burns was passed unnoticed, because of his principles, by many who had small occasion to scorn him because of his habits.

His dependence upon his salary as exciseman irritated him and deepened his despondency. He longed for a competency that he might be independent; but from the beginning to the end fortune mocked his every thrifty endeavor.

His nature was too sensitive to be indifferent to the treatment he was receiving. A friend met him one day walking alone on the shady side of the street, while the opposite walk was gay with successive groups of gentlemen and ladies, not one of whom seemed willing to recognize the poet. The friend proposed to him to cross, but he answered, "Nay, nay, my young friend, that's all over now," and then quoted a verse from an old ballad,

"His bonnet stood ance fu' fair on his brow,  
His auld ane looked better than mony ane's new,  
But now he let's 't wear ony way it will hing,  
And casts himself dowie upon the corn bing."

And yet it was during his Dumfries residence that Burns wrote most of his songs. He had been gathering old ballads, altering and adding to them for Johnson's Museum, besides contributing some of his own, when George Thomson entered upon his work of compiling Scottish melodies and having songs written for them by the best writers of the day. He applied to Burns for the help of his genius. Burns answered at once, promising his assistance, and redeemed his promise by contributing some sixty songs, among them the finest efforts of his lyric muse. And, poor as he was, he made it a labor of love. "As to remuneration," he wrote to Thomson, "you may think my songs above price or below price; but they shall be absolutely one or the other. In the honest enthusiasm with which I embark in your undertaking, to talk of money, wages, fee, hire, etc., would be downright prostitution of soul."

The man who could write songs like "Highland Mary," "Bannockburn," and "A Man's a Man for a' That," and make them, even when broken with disease and oppressed with poverty, a free gift to his country, is entitled to a charity in judgment broad enough to cover more sins than could ever be laid to Burns' charge.

Not until a few days before his death, when he knew that his end was near, and an importunate creditor was threatening him with a process that would cast him in jail, did he alter his purpose. He then wrote to Thomson for five pounds, for which he says, "I promise and engage to furnish you with five pounds' worth of the neatest song genius you have seen." With

this letter he enclosed the lines of "Fairest Maid on Devon Banks." Thomson sent the money, the creditor was paid, and within a week Burns was dead.

"We pity the plumage, and forget the dying bird," cried Shelley, as the brilliant Sheridan lay deserted upon his deathbed. And so it was with Burns. There was a splendid funeral. All Dumfries marched in procession to his grave, and a great mausoleum was raised above it. And happily better than this, though late it came, his family received the substantial recognition of his labors that was denied to him.

When he passed away in the prime of his early manhood, his country awoke to the fact that he was the greatest of all her children. No man before, and no man since, has done so much to honor her name.

He gave to Scottish literature what until then it wanted, a national quality and character. Men of letters there were before. Hume and Robertson had written their histories, but for aught that appeared in them, they might have come from south of the Tweed. Stewart and Reid belong to schools rather than to a nation. Ramsay and Ferguson were not strong enough to make an impression beyond their own time. Before Burns, the Scottish tongue had not attained to the dignity of literary recognition. He chose it deliberately as the medium of his song, and it mastered him as much as he mastered it. Little of what he has written in pure English rises above the level of mediocrity, and it would not be possible to anglicize his Scottish verse without distinct impairment of its poetic quality.

The theme of his verse, like its garb, was Scotch. It was his country and her people, the country as he saw it, the people as he knew them. The scenes he describes are those with which he was familiar, the men and women his every day acquaintances. He never paraphrased books and he never copied pictures. And beyond the confines of his country he had never traveled. Was he not, then, narrow and provincial? In a sense he was, as all genuine men and women are. Just because he knew Scotland so well and loved her so intensely, was he a poet of the world and of humanity. Love of home is a universal quality. Cosmopolitan people are degenerate. They have lost more in depth than they have gained in breadth. The man who scorns his own people is scorned of all others. The ardent patriot who defends his country in every emergency, and not the captious citizen ever ready to confess her faults, is the type of true manhood, understood and appreciated the world over.

In the poetry of Burns there is no suggestion of the pent atmosphere of the study infected with the smoke of the midnight candle, but it is all fresh with the caller air as it sweeps over heath and moor. His rhymes came to him as he walked the fields and by the streams, and they are the harmonies of nature set to song.

There is a quick movement in all his composition. He never lingers in description. A line will serve, or, at the most, as in his description of the brook in Hallowe'en, a verse.

“Whyles o’er a linn the burnie plays  
As thro’ the g’len it wimpelt,  
Whyles round a rocky scaur it strays  
Whyles in a wiel it dimpelt;  
Whyles glittered to the nightly rays,  
Wi’ bickerin’ dancin’ dazzle,  
Whyles clookit underneath the braes  
Below the spreading hazel.”

In his song of “Westlin Winds” he brings the birds of Scotland before us, each in a line.

“The partridge loves the fruitful fells,  
The plover loves the mountains,  
The woodcock haunts the lonely dells,  
The soaring hern the fountains;  
Through lofty groves the cushat roves,  
The path of man to shun it;  
The hazel bush o’erhangs the thrush,  
The spreading thorn the linnet.”

The essential qualities of Burns’ poems are their truth and humanity. His scenic descriptions are but the framing of some human incident, and he uses bird and beast and flower always to point some moral or adorn some tale of interest to man. He wrote as he felt, and so he wrote sometimes sadly and sometimes bitterly; sadly, for he was often seized with melancholy, and bitterly, because he felt often that he was harshly used. But, fortunately for us and for him, his muse sought him most in his brighter moods, and

“We see amid the fields of Ayr  
A ploughman who in foul or fair,  
Sings at his task,  
So clear we know not if it is  
The laverock’s song we hear or his,  
Nor care to ask.”

In the meanest creature and the humblest incident that enters into his life, this ploughman finds a poem,—in the daisy that he upturns, the field mouse, a wounded hare, his aged ewe, his dog, his auld mare, the haggis, and even in the toothache. And a louse upon a lady’s bonnet furnishes the occasion of profound moralizing.

“O wad some power the giftie gie us,  
To see ourselves as ithers see us,  
It wad fra mony a blunder free us,  
And foolish notion.”

In all literature there is no more beautiful picture of humble life than he gives us in the “Cotter’s Saturday Night.” It has invested the cottage with a charm of interest beyond the romance of the castle. It has lightened the task of many a weary toiler and kept hope in the heart of the heavy laden, and above all, it has taught that

“To make a happy fireside clime  
For weans and wife,  
That’s the true pathos and sublime  
Of human life.”



Had Burns lived longer, or had his circumstances in life been different, he might have given us some great epic or dramatic work. He contemplated one but it was never begun. That a great lyric drama was within the reach of his powers, his cantata of "The Jolly Beggars" abundantly proves. But "Tam O'Shanter" was his most ambitious production, and this, for picturesque description, for rapid transitions, and for a wonderful blending of mirth and morality, is not to be surpassed.

The austere critic thinks that Burns deals too lightly with Tam's foibles, and so he thinks of Shakespeare in his dealing with Falstaff. But these great natures were kindly both, and could see the soul of goodness in things evil, and their teaching loses nothing of its force because of its gentleness.

Burns could not even rail at the devil without speaking at least one word of kindly admonition.

"Fare you weel, auld nickie ben!  
O wad ye tak a thought an' men!  
Ye aiblins might, I dinna ken,  
Still hae a stake  
I'm wae to think upo' yon den,  
Even for your sake."

The songs of Burns will always be the chief delight of his readers, for they run the whole gamut of human passion and sentiment.

He sings of woman, and of every woman that ever touched his heart or caught his fancy, and then, lest some one might feel slighted, he sang

to all the sex in his "Green grow the rashies O!" Criticism of these songs is impossible. They must be read, or, better, they must be sung by some loved voice, and then the heart will feel their power. To no mere trick of verse do they owe their charm. It is the genuineness of their sentiment, the reality of their passion, which holds us in thrall. It has been noted that in "Highland Mary" there is not a single perfect rhyme, and this is true, but who cares for that, it is none the less the sweetest song ever written by man to commemorate a pure and a lost love.

And where is there such a song of that love which never grows old as "John Anderson, My Jo?"

In other fields of lyric verse, he is also the master. What drinking song better than "Willie brewed a peck of maut;" what battle hymn more inspiring than "Bannockburn?" Who has sounded in such trumpet tones the principles of equality as he in "A man's a man for a' that?" And when, among the many millions who speak the English tongue, friends are gathered together, in what song do they pour out their gladness, but "Auld Lang Syne?"

He pictured himself often as a wreck upon life's sea, and envied sometimes those whose "prudent, cautious self control," kept them from the rocks; and yet, of all the merchant argosies that, sailing under summer skies and over summer seas, came safely into the port of their destiny, how many, aye, were there any, bearing in their holds a freight so precious to humanity as the flotsam and the jetsam cast ashore by the wreck of Robert Burns?

But it is not for us to speak of his life as a wreck. Although he died while his manhood was in its early prime, he had realized the inspiring wish of his youth, some useful plan or book to make or sing a song at least. He made the book; he sang the song and the book is read and the sang is heard the wide world over.

On the Burns Night of 1911, the Club recorded tribute to the memory of a late member, Joseph A. Graham, who had been one of the zealous, steadfast promoters of the Burns Cottage at the World's Fair:

"He was of that nature to which the gospel of Burns appealed strongly. He viewed men with the tolerance bred of a newspaper life. He loved dogs. We, of the Burns Club, recall fondly the charming personality of our late associate and we voice our tribute to his memory, borrowing the lines:

Heav'n rest his saul, whare'er he be!  
Is the wish o' mony mae than me;  
He had twa faults, or may be three,  
Yet what remead?  
Ae social, honest man want we.  
Tam Samson's dead."

## THE BURNS CLUB OF ST. LOUIS.

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